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ABSTRACT

The Colorado Adult Literacy Commission assessed the status of illiteracy in Colorado and the degree to which current programs met students' needs. Participants at regional meetings identified these issues: (1) low basic skills hamper economic development; (2) low literacy levels represent a threat to health and safety; (3) illiteracy and crime are connected; (4) illiteracy is intergenerational; (5) major barriers keep Coloradans from improving literacy skills; and (6) insufficient funds restrict literacy programs. The commission established an eighth-grade reading and mathematics level as minimally acceptable. The costs of low literacy levels were identified as decreased productivity and competitiveness; increased cost of doing business; dwindling prospects; and links with crime, homelessness, and poverty. Situational barriers confronted illiterate adults; lack of funds was the major obstacle for programs. Literacy training was provided through the Adult Education Office of the Colorado Department of Education, the Governor's Job Training Office, the Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System, Department of Corrections, probation services, social services, and local providers. Issues that became apparent from a review of other states' practices were these: (1) building the capacity of providers to respond to changing needs; (2) developing goals of instruction that meet identified needs; and (3) workplace literacy. (An executive summary lists the commission's vision, goals, and recommendations.) (YLB)

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SILENT CRISIS

ADULT ILLITERACY IN COLORADO

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SILENT CRISIS

ADULT ILLITERACY IN COLORADO

By Peggy Odell Gonder, APR

The Final Report of the Colorado Adult Literacy Commission
January, 1991

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FOREWORD

The illiteracy problem in Colorado is real. Colorado employers report that up to 40 percent of their semi-skilled workers lack the ability to use reading and math skills appropriately on the job.

The Colorado State Board of Education is addressing the problem through its goal of significantly lowering the dropout rate statewide. Local school districts are required to establish goals on attendance, achievement and lowered dropout rates, which will help reduce the number of adults who will need help in the future.

But these efforts will not help the 400,000 adults already in the workforce who have not completed high school. Current literacy activities to assist these individuals are reaching only a small proportion of those who need help because so little funding is available.

Colorado needs a broad-based, large scale effort to raise literacy levels of adults. That is why the State Board of Education appointed an Adult Literacy Commission whose members represent the policy makers and major players in Colorado's current literacy system.

This final report represents the culmination of more than a year's research on the problem, augmented with facts and examples given by some of the approximately 400 Coloradans who participated in the regional literacy hearings.

The Commission intends to pursue legislation in January, 1990, that seeks to provide, for the first time, state funding for adult literacy in Colorado. The Commission welcomes your comments on this report and we urge your continued attention to this vital problem facing Colorado.

— Thomas M. Howerton, Chairman
Colorado State Board of Education and
Adult Literacy Commission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Colorado State Board of Education appointed an Adult Literacy Commission in April, 1989 to assess the status of illiteracy in Colorado, the degree to which current programs are meeting students' needs and to make recommendations for change.

After a year of research, the Commission has identified these critical facts:

1. A substantial number of Coloradans lack basic skills necessary for them to function productively.
2. Illiteracy costs the state in many ways: it limits economic development, exacerbates social problems, such as crime, unemployment and homelessness, and affects an at-risk child's ability to succeed in school.
3. Colorado is one of a small number of states that provides no funding for literacy services to the general adult population.
4. The problem is hidden: illiterate adults hide their problem and avoid seeking help, fearing ridicule and loss of employment. The literacy "system" is comprised of a diverse network of providers that is less visible than the higher education and public school systems. This lack of visibility keeps the literacy issue off the public agenda.
5. Adult Basic Education programs do work. Studies show that persons who complete programs obtain employment, are able to advance in their careers and meet other personal goals.
6. The problem requires a comprehensive solution, involving state and private sector cooperation, to make significant progress in a short period of time.

Colorado is one of a few states that provides no funding for literacy.

With these facts at hand, the Commission developed a vision for literacy in Colorado and a series of preliminary goals and recommendations. At the Adult Literacy Commission's regional hearings, many thoughtful Coloradans gave additional suggestions, commented on the preliminary suggestions and furnished further insights on what motivates adults to seek help and the barriers both adults and literacy programs face in raising basic skill levels.

Following the hearings, the Commission weighed this vast evidence to prepare the following final goals and recommendations. The broad scope of the recommendations, which are addressed to the Legislature, the Governor, the business community, literacy providers and state agencies, illustrates that solving adult illiteracy is a task that a wide range of individuals and organizations will need to address together.

Adult Literacy Commission Vision, Goals and Recommendations

VISION

Colorado citizens will possess the reading, writing and math skills necessary to obtain and maintain employment, reach personal goals, adapt to a changing environment and participate fully in a

democratic society. As more citizens possess higher literacy skills, Colorado will experience less demand on social services, the state will be more attractive to employers planning to relocate and business and industry will be more competitive with their counterparts in other states and countries.

PRIMARY GOAL

Census figures indicate that 200,000 Colorado adults have no more than an eighth grade education, and 100,000 have less than an eighth grade education. The Adult Literacy Commission's goal is for 50,000 adults to achieve a minimum of eighth grade proficiency in basic skills, and preferably, a high school diploma or high school equivalency by 1995.

In order to achieve this goal, the Adult Literacy Commission adopts these supporting goals.

SUPPORTING GOALS

Literacy Priority

1. The State of Colorado, through its elected officials, businesses, agencies and citizens, will place a priority on raising literacy levels of its citizens.

Financial Support

2. State and private financial support will be adequate to ensure comprehensive services to all citizens. Programs will serve those who wish to improve their literacy skills in a range of settings that meet individual needs.

Goal: 50,000 adults proficient in basic skills by 1995.

Collaborative Efforts

3. Colorado's literacy delivery system will continue to recognize and support a diversity of literacy providers and delivery sites statewide.
4. Colorado will develop a collaborative system for adult literacy services that supports and promotes programs and coordinates data collection and services.

Adult Literacy Programs

5. Businesses and adult literacy programs will form partnerships to address changing skill requirements of Colorado employers.
6. Literacy programs will address the needs of parents to reinforce their children's education.
7. Programs will be accountable through measures that consider curriculum quality, its relevance to learner needs, quality of tutor and staff training, and an organization's ability to serve hard-to-reach individuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Legislature

The Adult Literacy Commission recommends that:

1. The Legislature enact Comprehensive Adult Literacy Legislation that provides state funds and encourages private funding of literacy services. Funding would be from new sources, not from current sources. The State funds would support local literacy providers and a statewide commission based at Colorado Department of Education.
2. The Legislation include funding for: adult basic education/literacy instruction, English as a Second Language, GED preparation/adult high schools, correctional and institutional education, family literacy and workplace literacy. It would permit expenditures to recruit, teach and support students, provide materials, help with day care and transportation, network with other agencies and reach out to potential students.
3. The Legislature direct the State Board of Education to develop program standards to which literacy providers that receive state funds would be held accountable.
4. The Legislature continue to support a diverse delivery system, such as programs at public schools, community colleges, community-based organizations and libraries.
5. The Legislature establish a volunteer Colorado Adult Literacy Commission based at the Colorado Department of Education with administrative support to gather comparable data, survey needs, provide awareness of literacy issues, and encourage cooperation among organizations that provide literacy services.
6. The Legislature establish incentives to increase literacy skills by mandating literacy training as a condition of probation and parole, when applicable.
7. The Legislature identify as priorities family literacy and delivery of literacy services to rural areas.
8. The Legislature authorize tax credits for businesses that support literacy training for employees.
9. The Legislature enact incentives for welfare recipients to increase their literacy skills.

...a law with state funds that encourages private funds.

Governor

The Adult Literacy Commission recommends that:

10. The Governor continue to emphasize adult literacy as a priority for education and economic development and to support the efforts of the Colorado Adult Literacy Commission.
11. The Governor promote cooperation among state agencies and facilitate cohesive efforts at the state level.

Colorado Adult Literacy Commission

The Adult Literacy Commission recommends that:

12. The Colorado Adult Literacy Commission promote collaboration, coordination and information sharing among all agencies and programs involved with literacy.
13. The Colorado Adult Literacy Commission, in cooperation with coalitions, media and literacy providers, develop an ongoing public information strategy for informing the public of the problems of illiteracy and assisting local programs in recruiting students, teachers and tutors.
14. The Colorado Adult Literacy Commission shall develop cooperative activities with large and small businesses to support literacy programs.
15. The Colorado Adult Literacy Commission form a task force representing the business community and literacy providers to develop a mechanism to identify the necessary workforce skills to be taught to literacy students. The mechanism should include ways to share information at least annually to ensure that instructional materials are up-to-date and relevant.
16. The Colorado Adult Literacy Commission support continuation of clearinghouse services statewide (i.e. COLAC or similar agency).
17. The Colorado Adult Literacy Commission establish a timetable for implementing these recommendations.
18. The Colorado Adult Literacy Commission make recommendations as appropriate to the Legislature, Governor, and state agencies.

Maintain a diversity of literacy providers.

State Board of Education, Colorado Department of Education

The Adult Literacy Commission recommends that:

19. The State Board of Education administer the state literacy legislation.
20. The State Board of Education develop rules and regulations for grants.
21. The State Board of Education develop program standards and hold literacy providers accountable.
22. The State Board of Education shall appoint an Adult Literacy Commission with the following representation:
    - State Senate*
    - House of Representatives*
    - Governor's Office*
    - Representatives from local Chambers of Commerce, Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry, National Federation of Independent Business, Colorado Chapter*
    - Business owners or representatives
    - Media
    - Governor's Job Training Office or Job Training Partnership Act*
    - Department of Social Services*
    - Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System*

- Department of Education*
- Department of Justice*
- Department of Corrections*
- Clearinghouse services (COLAC)
- Coalitions
- Literacy providers
  - School districts
  - Community colleges
  - Public libraries
  - Community based organizations

(Member nominated by the organization)*

23. The Colorado Department of Education maintain diversity of delivery systems.
24. The Colorado Department of Education collect student data and assess program needs.
25. The Colorado Department of Education establish literacy programs in areas where the need exists.

Colorado Businesses

The Adult Literacy Commission recommends that:

26. Colorado businesses allocate more of their staff development dollars for the education of employees lacking literacy skills, particularly in the areas of reading and math.
27. Businesses form partnerships with local literacy providers to share information on workplace literacy needs, to refer employees and to promote volunteer opportunities.
28. Business leaders support literacy activities in their community through their local service organizations.
29. Businesses include literacy help in their employee assistance programs and create a culture in the workplace that values education and literacy skills.
30. Businesses provide incentives to employees to improve their skill levels.
31. Businesses work with local literacy providers to learn how to incorporate literacy as part of work-related training.
32. The Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry highlight adult literacy needs in their annual action agenda, *Blueprint for Colorado.*

Agencies

The Adult Literacy Commission recommends that:

33. The Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Community Colleges and Occupational Education System, Governor's Job Training Office, Department of Corrections, Department of Justice, Department of Social Services and Department of Labor participate in the work of the Adult Literacy Commission by increasing collaborative efforts.
34. The Colorado Adult Literacy Commission work with the above agencies to develop procedures for gathering comparable information on programs and students.
35. These agencies finance additional literacy activities through existing funds.

Literacy Providers

The Adult Literacy Commission recommends that:

36. Local programs should have a delivery system that responds to individual needs, including: a) appropriate assessment, placement and evaluation, b) curriculum content respecting individual learning styles and groupings, c) when feasible, support services, including transportation, child care and peer support groups, and d) logistical arrangements that include convenient schedules and sites.
37. Literacy providers recruit and retain students and provide appropriate selection and training of all instructors to ensure professional teaching and respect for all cultures and learning differences.
38. Literacy providers establish family literacy programs that combine training for adults and programming for children with a time when parents and children together engage in activities that reinforce reading skills.

Public Schools

The Adult Literacy Commission recommends that:

39. Public schools develop a mechanism for identifying parents with literacy needs, such as through programs for at-risk students, and refer these adults to appropriate programs.
40. Public schools develop a close association with local businesses to find out what skills are required of their workers.
41. Public schools develop family literacy activities as a way to provide literacy help to parents through their children.

Establish family literacy programs.

Higher Education

The Adult Literacy Commission recommends that:

42. Universities conduct more research on the types of instructional methods that are most effective in teaching adults. Effective instructional techniques for reading, when identified, should be reflected in curriculum design and instructional programs for training **all** teachers.
43. Community colleges and universities give credit for participation of students as tutors in adult literacy activities.

Judiciary

The Adult Literacy Commission recommends that:

44. Judges exercise their authority and require probationers to attend literacy programs through the GED or adult high school level.

Corrections

The Adult Literacy Commission recommends that:

45. Correctional institutions establish a communication system among county jails, the Department of Corrections facilities, and local literacy programs that will result in the transfer of pertinent information on inmate assessment, goals, and progress.

Colorado Adults

The Adult Literacy Commission recommends that:

46. Colorado adults who lack skills explore education options in their geographic area, enroll in programs, and improve skill levels.

REGIONAL HEARINGS OVERVIEW

The Adult Literacy Commission sponsored 15 regional hearings throughout Colorado in September and October, 1990. The hearings were designed to gather information and recommendations from business leaders, social service providers, educators, corrections officials, adult students and adult education professionals. Testifiers were asked how low literacy levels were affecting their communities and what barriers faced adults who wanted to improve their skills.

Comments were remarkably similar across the state, although some regional differences did emerge. The major message reinforced at all hearings was: **Colorado has a serious literacy problem and local communities lack the resources to address the problem.**

Following are the major issues addressed at the hearings, along with specific examples.

1. **Low basic skills hamper economic development and increase employer costs.**
   - UNISYS of Pueblo estimates it will spend $50,000 on color photos that depict how machines are to be assembled, because many workers have difficulty with narrative descriptions in manuals. This problem was unexpected because prospective employees were prescreened for a sixth grade reading level.
   - Employers in the San Luis Valley, in northwest and southern Colorado have had to hire out-of-state workers because of a lack of qualified workers from their local areas.
   - One-fourth of the employees of a small Colorado bank failed a basic math pre-test needed to enter an accounting course offered by the American Institute of Banking.
   - Some western Colorado ranchers cannot get bank loans because they are unable to complete financial statements.

2. **Low literacy levels represent a threat to health and safety for Colorado citizens and employees.**
   - General Motors estimates its brake repair manuals are written at a 14th to 16th grade level. Repairs completed by an employee with low reading skills could affect the safety of the motoring public.
   - Cleaning jobs, which formerly were available to high school dropouts, now require the employee to mix chemicals to guard against infectious diseases, said Kathie Green, manager of the Deluxe Motel in Ft. Morgan.
   - Employees with skill deficiencies are more likely to be injured on the job because they cannot read warning signs. Employers face "massive liability" if they offer training but learning does not occur, warns Susan Good, professor of occupational safety at Colorado Mountain College.
   - Hazards are compounded when employees are not proficient in English. When a cogeneration plant was under construc-

tion in eastern Colorado, a worker was found cleaning the interior of a machine shortly before it was due to receive 5,000 volts of electricity. Construction site manager Frank Landis warned the man in Spanish to get out of the machine. A short time later, the man went back inside.

- Many Coloradans cannot read instructions on their prescription or follow dosages for ill children. One public health nurse arrived in time to stop an elderly gentleman from taking rose fertilizer from a container that looked like Tylenol.

3. Illiteracy can worsen serious social problems.

- Low reading levels inhibit recovery from drug and alcohol abuse. Due to funding cuts, Boulder's Alcohol Recovery Center works with most clients in groups, rather than one-to-one. "We have to rely more on printed material" to reinforce information covered in counseling sessions, said Roberto Dansie. Many of the clients lack the critical thinking skills to integrate the information with what is happening in their lives. "Without the critical thinking, the client remains in denial," Dansie said.
- More than one-third of the domestic violence victims served by the Eagle County Resource Center lack the literacy skills to escape abusive situations, said Cherie Pallor, director. "We can help with emotional support and finances, but we lack the resources to help with long-term needs like literacy."
- The low self-esteem that comes with low reading skills can lead to substance abuse and anti-social actions, such as battering and neurotic disorders, said Eric Rentz, Grand County Resource Center. He estimates that 10 percent of the center's clients are "functionally illiterate" and another 20 percent have "serious reading deficiencies."

Low skills hamper recovery from drug addiction.

4. Speakers reinforced the connection between illiteracy and crime.

- Sixty percent of probationers in the Twelfth Judicial District have literacy problems. There is no state money allocated for literacy assistance for this population.
- Nearly 100 percent of the probationers supervised by J.J. Raigoza of Pueblo who lack a diploma or G.E.D. are chronically unemployed or underemployed. Of the 225 probationers, 43 percent did not graduate from high school and 87 percent of those did not advance beyond 10th grade.
- As basic skills of inmates rise at the Araphaoe County Jail, Deputy C.D. Swanbom sees fewer problems with violence: "As adults become more educated, they take time to think."
- Adams County Employment Center has more success placing former jail inmates if they have participated in literacy programs. If applicants' literacy skills are so low they need

long-term help, "we lose them," said Donna Marsh-Jacobs, human development director.

5. **Illiteracy is intergenerational. To help at-risk children succeed, help must be provided for their parents.**
   - Achievement data presented by the Brush Public Schools indicates that Hispanic students score significantly lower in both reading comprehension and math from fifth grade on, when "marginally literate parents" can no longer assist with homework, said assistant superintendent John Gotto.
   - Adult education students at many hearings testified that continuing their education had a dramatic effect on their child's education, both as a role model and because they were now able to help their children with homework.
   - Parents with low basic skills are intimidated by their child's school. They are less likely to attend parent conferences and may not be able to read notes from the teacher.

6. **Major barriers exist that keep Coloradans from improving their literacy skills.**
   - **Distance/Transportation.** In isolated rural areas, students must drive up to 54 miles to class. Throughout Colorado, lack of public transportation to literacy sites is a barrier.
   - **Child Care**. Illiterate adults earn a minimum wage, at best, and have difficulty feeding their families. The cost of child care often prohibits their attendance in classes.
   - **Schedule Conflicts.** Programs operating on a shoestring can offer classes only a few days a week. Often, adults cannot attend because class times conflict with work schedules.
   - **Stigma/Fear**. "People are terrified to admit they can't read," said Cynthia Payne, education director of the American Institute of Banking, Rocky Mountain Chapter. A bank supervisor in her-mid 50's took all federally required paperwork home for her husband to fill out until "it caught up with her," Payne said.
   - **Cost**. Many adult education programs must be self-supporting and charge from $80 to $100 for classes. A number of adults who were served in federally-funded, tuition-free programs said they could not have afforded tuition.

Volunteers cannot do it all

7. **Lack of funds severely restrict literacy programs. There are limits to what volunteers can accomplish.**
   - Literacy efforts in Hayden and Moffat Counties are "totally stalled" because of a lack of paid coordinators. Volunteers will spend three hours per week tutoring, but are unwilling to commit 20 hours a week as a coordinator, doing "grinding paperwork," said Sheila Harper, literacy coordinator in Craig.

- Nonprofit literacy programs spend inordinate amounts of time fund-raising, which is time that cannot be spent in long-range planning and outreach efforts to potential students.
- Inadequate funding for materials forces students to share workbooks, making it difficult to reinforce skills at home between classes.
- Tutors need training on how to help adults, particularly those with learning disabilities, and ongoing support from a supervisor to help when problems arise. Lack of staff to provide this support causes turnover of both students and tutors.

"...a chance to become whole again."

8. Literacy assistance is a life-changing experience for many Coloradans.

- "My whole life has been a secret," said 52-year old Lakewood resident Betty Rodriguez. None of her many friends knew she could not read. "The biggest thrill in my life is to be able to pay my own bills and not to have to take anyone with me to the doctor."
- Two brain aneurysms robbed Eddie Magmer of the ability to speak, read or write. After one-to-one tutoring, he is taking college classes. "The (literacy) program has given me a chance to become whole again, a chance to recover from my disabilities and become a useful member of society," he said.
- Before getting help, Adult Learning Source student Rosalie Martinez of Denver didn't care about her appearance. "Now I feel more secure about myself, I've gotten more involved in my church. I'm not ashamed that I can't read and write well, because I'm doing something about it. The state should spend money building minds," she added, "not prisons."

I. THE PROBLEM IS REAL

When it comes to education, Colorado is a state of haves and have-nots. Colorado ranks second nationally in the amount of schooling the average adult has completed. Because of the state's large number of college-educated adults, the median education level is 12.8 years. At the same time, census figures indicate more than 400,000 Coloradans have not completed high school, almost 200,000 have no more than an eighth grade education and 100,000 have less than an eighth grade education.

Because Colorado is one of a handful of states that provides **no state funding for adult basic education**, less than 10 percent of persons who need help are receiving it.

Who Pays for Illiteracy?

Low literacy levels interfere with the ability to get a job and to help one's children in school. This undereducated segment of the workforce increases employers' costs of doing business when mistakes are made or additional training is needed.

These Coloradans, who are often embarrassed to come forward and ask for help, cope with their lack of reading, writing and math skills with artful techniques that disguise their disability. But this lack of basic skills exacts a large toll on the persons themselves, their children who struggle with school, and Colorado's economy as the state seeks to gain a competitive edge in national and world markets.

Most of the year 2000 workforce is now out of school.

Jobs for Colorado's Future, a public-private partnership to enhance the state's competitiveness, expressed concern at the lack of investment in adult literacy and the correspondingly low participation rates of adults in literacy programs. **"Colorado is losing the literacy battle,"** the organization said in *A Call to Action: The Preliminary Action Plan of Jobs for Colorado's Future.*

Whither Colorado's Workforce?

Three-fourths of the adults that will be available to work in Colorado in the year 2000 are already out of school. Reforms of K-12 education currently underway will not help these individuals.

What's more, the proportion of minorities and females in the workforce will increase in the 21st Century. Colorado cannot afford to "write off" portions of the population as unemployable. To compete in today's global economy, Colorado needs ALL of its citizens to be equipped to contribute, either directly as employees or indirectly as parents who encourage and assist their children to do well in school.

Strategic Economic Development

Governor Roy Romer made strengthening the state's education system—at all levels—a cornerstone of the economic development strategic plan presented to the Legislature in January, 1990.

Within the number one strategy—building a world class education system for Coloradans—is the goal of Eliminating Adult Illiteracy.

In *The 1995 Report: The Draft Five Year Economic Development Strategic Plan*, Governor Romer has proposed six initiatives to address the problem of adult illiteracy in Colorado:

1. Develop comprehensive data to define and measure illiteracy.
2. Enhance effective literacy programs through increased coordination and support.
3. Establish a literacy corps of trained volunteer tutors.
4. Develop programs to enhance the basic skills of mothers whose children are enrolled in early childhood education programs.
5. Impose education requirements on receipt of Aid to Families with Dependent Children funds by expanding the JOBS program.
6. Reduce illiteracy among inmates and ex-offenders.

The Adult Literacy Commission has been working for the past year to assess the status of illiteracy in Colorado, the degree to which current programs are meeting students' needs and to make recommendations for changes.

One of the Commission's major tasks was to develop a definition of literacy. It is a complex issue, discussed nationally by policy makers, educators and business executives, for which there are no easy answers.

II.

DEFINING LITERACY

Defining "literacy" is a challenge. The problem stems from a lack of common agreement about what it means to be literate in the closing years of the 20th Century.

At its most basic level, literacy is the ability to write one's name. But virtually no one who hires employees, teaches adult basic education or who develops policy for adult education accepts this rock bottom definition of literacy.

Instead, one finds different definitions of functional literacy, workplace literacy and myriad benchmarks equivalent to grades of completion in school. For example, government agencies and others who have attempted to define acceptable reading levels of adults have variously established the literacy cutoff as ninth grade, eighth grade, seventh grade and fourth grade.

Survival Skills

Some researchers look at functional literacy as basic survival skills. This, at the lowest level, may include the ability to distinguish—on a grocery shelf—between a lemon scented dishwashing detergent (with a lemon on the label) and lemon juice.

A higher survival skill is the ability to fill out a job, food stamp, or disability income application. While it is desirable that all citizens have these minimal skills, "literacy" must encompass far more.

There is no national agreement on the definition of literacy.

Literacy, in fact, is a skill continuum, where the level required is affected by the task at hand. Driving a car and interpreting road signs require a fairly low skill level. At the other extreme, being an informed voter in a democracy, requires an individual to have the analytical skills to interpret and weigh conflicting claims of candidates and complex ballot issues.

Literacy Continuum

Into this murky area of study comes the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which has conducted the most thorough research to date on literacy levels related to specific, measurable skills. NAEP defined literacy within three broad categories: **prose** (information from texts), **document** (application forms, maps) and **quantitative** (using numbers).To test literacy levels of 21-25 year olds, National Assessment developed a 500-point continuum of skills for each of the three areas. A 275 level skill in prose literacy, for example, includes the ability to write a letter to explain that an error has been made in a billing charge. Slightly more than two-thirds of the sample (72 percent) could perform this skill.

Workplace Literacy

Literacy is a function of context. When designing policy, the question must be: literate for what purpose? One important reason for an individual to possess literacy skills is to obtain employment and be self-supporting.

For Colorado to remain competitive in attracting new business and effectively nurture home-grown small businesses, the state must contain a highly skilled work force able to adapt to changing conditions. In fact, small businesses, which employ the majority of Colorado workers, need employees who can perform a variety of tasks and can independently anticipate and resolve unforeseen problems.

Workplace literacy includes a continuum of skills, depending on the type of job the individual seeks to perform. Jobs are becoming more complex, which will require higher skill levels in the future. To the business owner, literacy may include the ability to compute, write orders, make judgments and solve problems.

Employer Perspective

A two-year study by the U.S. Department of Labor and the American Society for Training and Development found that employers wanted their staffs to have well-developed interpersonal skills, the ability to reason and solve problems and to manage their workload in addition to the basic skills of reading, writing and computation.

The findings are described in the report, *Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want.* The skills are contained in seven key groups:

- **Three R's:** Employees should have competent reading, writing and computation skills that are applied appropriately to the situation. Often, the skills needed in the workplace are different from those taught in the classroom. For example, reading tasks in school often focus on determining the main idea and the ability to recall facts. In the workplace, the reader may need to skim a large amount of information quickly to locate facts and fashion them into a memo. In school, math is taught sequentially. On the job, an employee may be called upon to use a skill not recently used.
- **Listening and Oral Communication:** The average person spends 8.4 percent of communications time writing, 13 percent reading, 23 percent speaking and 55 *percent of the time listening.* Employees should be able to hear a customer's concerns and convey an adequate response.
- **Learning to Learn:** Employers want employees who can learn the particular skills of an available job.
- **Creative Thinking/Problem Solving:** Employees should be able to think on their feet and develop innovative solutions when needed.
- **Self-Esteem/Goal Setting-Motivation/Personal & Career Development:** Employees need to have pride in themselves, know how to get things done and have a sense of skills needed to perform well.
- **Interpersonal/Negotiation/Teamwork:** Employees should get along with customers, suppliers and co-workers and be able to work with others to achieve a goal.

- **Organizational Effectiveness/Leadership:** Employers want staff who have some sense of where the organization is headed and who can assume responsibility and motivate co-workers when necessary.

Functional Literacy

Most states look at literacy in terms of a person's performance relative to a grade completion in public schools. For example, the number of persons lacking at least an eighth grade reading level are considered "functionally illiterate." A survey by the Education Commission of the States found that 17 states measured literacy in terms of school grade levels.

Colorado Definition

The Adult Literacy Commission agrees with the premise that literacy represents a continuum of skills that are meaningful in the context of a persons's role as parent, employee, citizen and individual. To guide state-level policy and to communicate issues clearly, however, the Commission has chosen a single definition of literacy rather than levels of literacy:

What is literacy?

Literacy is the possession of basic communication and computational skills that enable individuals to solve problems, to meet their own objectives and to function effectively in our rapidly changing society. Communication skills include reading, writing, speaking and listening. Computational skills include using arithmetic to solve problems.

In order to measure progress in Colorado's effort to improve basic skills among adults, the Commission establishes an eighth grade reading and math level as a minimally acceptable level for all Colorado adults. This does not imply that adults who read below eighth grade are nonfunctional. Adults who have less than an eighth grade reading level who are employed and contributing to the community have developed excellent coping skills to compensate for any deficiencies.

As an example, persons with adequate literacy skills are able to:

- Read a note sent home from school
- Use a phone book
- Follow directions in an instructional manual
- Fill out a job application
- Understand medicine labels
- Make correct change for customers
- Measure accurately

It is Colorado's challenge to provide a system through which all adults have access to services to improve their basic skills, when they require a higher skill level than they possess.

III. ILLITERACY IN COLORADO

How serious is the illiteracy problem in Colorado?

Colorado has a serious problem with adults who lack basic skills. In a 1989 survey by Jobs for Colorado's Future, **28 percent of employees surveyed said they needed more training in reading, writing and arithmetic skills to do their present jobs better**. Over 40 **percent** said they needed training of all kinds to do their present job.

The results are even more striking when Colorado employers are questioned about the literacy levels of their work force. **More than one-third (35 percent) of Colorado employers rated their semi-skilled employees (operators, fabricators and laborers) as poor or fair in reading skills and nearly half (40 percent) rated these employees as poor or fair in math skills.**

Despite this need, census figures and adult education statistics indicate that only five percent of adults in the Denver metropolitan area **who are eligible and in need of adult basic education are currently being served.**

Low literacy levels exact a cost on Colorado's economy and society in a variety of ways. These deficits affect the state's economy, social problems and the educational system.

Productivity & Competitiveness

"Literacy is a standard of living issue," said Robert Scott, director of economic development for the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce. Colorado's standard of living is declining because of a negative trade deficit of more than $50 billion a year. "We cannot compete with the Far East by offering cheap labor. The value we add has to be technology and knowledge. We're going in the wrong direction," Scott said.

While jobs are becoming increasingly complex, Colorado employers are finding an increasing number of applicants lack the minimum skills required. Public Service Company of Colorado fails nearly half the applicants who take a basic skills test for some positions. Safeway found that one-third of applicants failed a basic skills test they gave applicants from 1982-85. The company discontinued use of the test when it converted to decentralized hiring.

"I continually hear employers say they can't get skilled employees," said Jim Henderson, regional advocate for the Small Business Administration. **"They have to train people to use cash registers, teach them to add and subtract. They don't show an employee something once, but three to five times."**

"The employer may misidentify the problem as a clash of personalities, when, in fact, the problem is that one employee is always asking for help from a coworker," he explained.

Increasing the Cost of Doing Business

Poor reading or English language skills can translate into costly errors for employers. A Colorado resort hotel lost $1,500 worth of pots and pans because non-English speaking employees could not read the directions on the cleanser.

Sometimes the costs of illiteracy are subtle. When customer files are incomplete because reports are not written or problems not found, Rural Route Video must send trucks out several times to fix one problem, said Chris May, manager of the Ignacio cable company. "In the 1990's, every employee must be a salesperson," May added. Employees must be able to explain services well to customers and to be "math literate" to complete the paperwork.

Employers misidentify the problem.

Dwindling Prospects

From the employee side, increasing complexity of jobs means higher rates of unemployment and lower income levels for the unskilled.

According to employers in a 1983 Colorado Employability Skills Survey, 60 percent of the young people were rejected because of deficiencies in the applications or interview process. Young applicants were particularly weak in legible writing, spelling, English usage, and often failed to express an interest in or knowledge of the position and the company.

In 1989, adults lacking a high school diploma made up 25 percent of persons seeking work through the Colorado Department of Employment.

A 1988 Colorado State Library study found that such persons were:

- Almost twice as likely to live below the poverty level;
- More likely to be unemployed;
- In households earning only 75 cents for every dollar earned by more literate households;
- Slightly more likely to live in rural than in urban Colorado in 1980.

Illiteracy and Crime

Many studies have shown a link between crime and low skill levels. A 1977 study for the U.S. Department of Justice estimated that more than 36 percent of delinquent boys suffered from *previously undiagnosed* learning disabilities. When the learning disabled offenders were identified and given 40 to 50 hours of remedial assistance, few committed second offenses.

A 1989 study by the Institute for Educational Leadership, "The Same Client", found a **high correlation between states that had a high dropout rate and those with high prison populations. "The correlation," said author Harold L. Hodgkinson, "is greater than the correlation between smoking and lung cancer."**

In Colorado, 80 percent of inmates read below a ninth grade level. Slightly more than half (55 percent) lack a high school diploma or GED.

Illiteracy and Homelessness

Evidence and common sense show the same link between low literacy levels and social problems. Homelessness can often be traced

to a lack of employment, due to low skill levels, that is exacerbated by an inability to fill out complex forms for government assistance, such as Food Stamps.

The Denver Rescue Mission conducted a survey of residents and patrons in June, 1989. Of those who responded, nearly three fourths had graduated from high school or received a GED certificate. Within that group, however, 71 percent had difficulty completing job applications, taking a prescription medication, completing a rental form or reading traffic signs. Fourteen percent reported losing a job opportunity because of poor reading skills.

Of high school dropouts who responded, 79 percent said they would like to return to school, while 60 percent of the high school graduates said they would like to return to school.

Table 1

COSTS TO COLORADO TAXPAYERS OF PROVIDING/NOT PROVIDING LITERACY SERVICES

PROGRAM	ANNUAL COST
Maintain each inmate in prison	$18,500
Welfare cost per recipient (including Medicaid and food stamps)	$ 9,823
Per Pupil Cost - K-12 Education	$ 4,633
Adult Basic Education - per pupil	$60 to 200*

** ABE figures reflect federal reimbursement to local programs. Actual cost to deliver the service is higher, forcing programs to spend an inordinate amount of time fund-raising, rather than on student and volunteer recruitment, training staff and assessing student progress.*

Illiteracy and Poverty

A study of 500 current and former Colorado welfare clients found that 90 percent had held jobs, often only briefly. The study, *Breaking the Cycle of Dependency*, said that 80 percent reported that the jobs did not "pay enough." About 40 percent of clients **who go off welfare eventually return to AFDC, which suggest that the individuals have inadequate preparation or other resources to make a successful transition to self sufficient living.**

What is the cost to Colorado taxpayers?

While a job was seen as key to self-sufficiency, those with a high school education were far more likely to be working than those who had not finished high school. Circumstances, such as layoffs and injuries, can force employed persons onto welfare if they lack the skills to retrain for another job. "Without C.A.L.L. [the Center for Adult Learning in Loveland], I'd be on welfare," said Keith Downey. The former welder was injured on the job and transferred to the purchasing department. Adult education classes gave Downey the literacy skills he needed to succeed in the new position.

Families and Illiteracy

The National Assessment of Educational Progress measures achievement among 9-, 13- and 17-year olds in the United States in reading, writing, math and other subjects. The assessments often ask the students to report the educational level of the parents. **One consistent theme for all age groups is that students whose parents completed high school and college score significantly higher than children whose parents did not complete high school.**

Table 2

READING PROFICIENCY LEVELS & PARENTAL EDUCATION NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS, 1988

LEVELS OF PARENTAL EDUCATION	AGE OF STUDENTS TESTED 9 YRS	13 YRS	17 YRS
Not Graduated High School	192.5	246.5	267.4
Graduated High School	210.8	252.7	282.0
Post High School	220.0	265.3	299.5

PROFICIENCY LEVELS

150 RUDIMENTARY - able to carry out simple, discrete reading tasks.
200 BASIC - Able to understand specific or sequentially related information.
250 INTERMEDIATE - Able to search for specific information, interrelate ideas, and make generalizations.
300 ADEPT - Able to find, understand, summarize and explain relatively complicated information.
350 ADVANCED - Able to synthesize and learn from specialized reading materials.

Educators know that beginning students have an advantage if their parents read to them and expose them to reading materials. It is clear from the NAEP data that this advantage for children whose parents have high literacy levels—and the disadvantage to children whose parents have low literacy skills— continues throughout school careers.

Most of the children enrolled in the Adams County School District 12 Chapter 1 program, which works with at-risk elementary students, "have parents who have difficulty reading and writing," said Nancy Hawkins, program director. Conversely, at the High Plains High School in Adams County, many adult students "say their children's grades have improved since they've enrolled," said Carolyn Lambrecht, coordinator. The adults also feel more comfortable going to their child's school.

Policy-makers concerned about reducing dropout rates and increasing success rates at schools need to consider the parents' basic skill levels or they will be ignoring a significant aspect of the school success equation.

One promising new approach in adult education is to offer literacy training to the whole family. Often, adults who have diffi-

culty reading will be motivated to seek help when they start having children or when those children reach school age.

While large numbers of Colorado adults need literacy services, many barriers discourage or limit students from seeking assistance. Barriers exist for both employed and unemployed Coloradans. Even when students begin literacy training, circumstances often arise that cause them to drop out.

Fear

Many individuals who cannot read become skillful at covering up their handicap, by relying on visual cues and ruses. They are embarrassed to admit they cannot read and may fear being fired if their employer discovers the true extent of their skill deficiency.

"I was frightened to death, going back to school," said Aurora student Joyce Westerfield, who dropped out of school in the eleventh grade, but whose reading skills had slipped to the eighth grade level. "I thought I would be the oldest one."

Related to fear and embarrassment is a lack of confidence. Persons who dropped out of school have already experienced failure in the educational system. For these individuals, repeated encouragement by a caring friend, relative or colleague may be required before they have the courage to try again to learn.

Even when individuals find the courage to enroll in a class, lack of emotional support from the family can play a role in the adult's failure to complete a class. "Learning to read changes the family dynamics," said Susan Wolf, a teacher at the Technical Education Center in Adams county. Nonreading adults are very dependent on spouses or family members to interpret the world around them. When the adult starts learning to read and becomes more independent, the family member may resist and oppose the classes, Wolf explained.

Why don't more adults take advantage of literacy programs?

Other Barriers

There are many situational barriers that block an individual's ability to enroll and complete a literacy program. Lack of child care or transportation make it difficult for parents to attend programs. Low income and unemployed persons sometimes move frequently, making it difficult to participate in a program over time.

Students in Colorado's Adult Basic Education classes were surveyed in 1987-88. Of those who left without meeting their objectives, the largest proportion, 40 percent, left the area where the program was located.

Persons who work full-time and have children, often have difficulty squeezing time for instruction into a full schedule. Cost is also a problem for many.

Jobs for Colorado's Future identified eight major factors that Colorado workers listed as obstacles to obtaining education and training.

Table 3

OBSTACLES TO TRAINING OR EDUCATION	RESPONSES
Not offered at a convenient time or place	64%
Cost too much	51
Good training programs not available	41
No time or energy	33
Don't know what's available	30
Know what's available but not sure what to choose	29
Lack of child care	18
Lack of transportation	16

Jobs for Colorado's Future, 1989 Survey of Colorado Workers

Barriers for Programs

Lack of funds is a major obstacle to expanding adult literacy opportunities in Colorado. This shortage limits not only the number of students who may enroll; it limits each program's ability to address obstacles.

Why aren't there more literacy programs?

Limited funding forces programs to devote considerable time and energy to fund-raising and grant writing. Such efforts divert resources that might be devoted to outreach to those adults who are most in need of help, but who lack the confidence or information to come forward.

Constantly seeking grants means many programs must focus their goals in ways that satisfy the requirements of foundations, instead of focusing strictly on what skills and objectives will best meet the needs of the learners and the job market.

Literacy providers, particularly in rural areas, are unable to offer classes at a range of times that would be convenient to prospective students. For example, daytime classes conflict with work schedules. Some testified at the regional hearings that they could not attend evening classes because of a lack of public transportation. Social services providers spoke of the desire to refer welfare recipients to literacy training year-round. This was not possible in many areas where classes were not offered in the summer.

Providers also face the problem of student motivation. While it is a strength that adult learners come to programs voluntarily because they want to learn, it is also true that the barriers students face can cause them to leave programs for reasons unrelated to the quality of the program.

IV. CURRENT COLORADO PROGRAMS

Literacy training is provided in a variety of ways in Colorado. Adults may attend programs in a public school, a library, a community college, in prison, at a community organization, in private schools and colleges, or in their own homes.

Instruction in reading, writing, math, and English as a Second Language is provided through classes and in one-to-one tutoring programs. Some programs operate learning labs where students may use computers.

Program Coordination

More than 100 adult literacy programs are operated in Colorado. Some are open to the general public, while others are designed to assist specific populations.

One element common to most programs is that they receive at least some funding from the federal government. In Colorado, most of the federal literacy funds are administered by three agencies: the Adult Education Office of the Colorado Department of Education; the Governor's Job Training Office and the Colorado Community Colleges and Occupational Education System. Other statewide efforts are coordinated by the Colorado Departments of

Table 4

ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS FUNDED BY THE COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION 1988-89

STATE LEVEL PROGRAM	# PROGRAMS PROVIDING INSTRUCTION*	STUDENTS GRADES 0-8	ESL**	GED†	TOTAL
Adult Basic Education	40	6075	4725	2700	13,500
Amnesty Education	42		5725		5725
Colorado Literacy Action	26	1500			1500
Refugee English	2		675		675
Homeless Literacy	6	79	1	28	108
	116	7654 (35.6%)	11,126 (51.7%)	2728 (12.7%)	21,508 (100%)

OTHER STATE PROGRAMS

50 General Education Development Testing Centers	9,211 Students Tested, 7,461 (81%) Obtained GED
6 LITERACY COALITIONS	Colorado Springs, Ft. Collins, Mesa County Denver , Logan County, Pueblo
8 ADULT HIGH SCHOOLS (1350 Students Enrolled)	Aurora, Ft. Collins, Monte Vista Denver #1, Lakewood, Northglenn Denver / Mapleton, Longmont

* *Duplicate agency count because some agencies offer more than one program.*
** *ESL-English as a Second Language*
† *GED-General Educational Development*

Corrections, Institutions and Social Services. One useful way to describe the adult education "system" in Colorado is through these coordinating agencies.

CDE Adult Education Office

The Adult Education Office of the Colorado Department of Education administers grants for five major programs, which last year served more than 21,000 Colorado adults. (See Table 4)

The office provides training and technical assistance for staff and tutors. The Resource Center maintains a collection of 3,000 adult education materials that are available for use by any teacher, administrator or volunteer in the state.

Grants are given to school districts, community colleges and community-based organizations for three programs:

- **Adult Basic Education** - Reading and math instruction, English as a Second Language and preparation for the General Educational Development (GED) test.
- **Amnesty Education** - A five year program through the U.S. Immigration Reform and Control Act that provides English, civics, literacy, and GED instruction for newly legalized persons in Colorado.
- **Colorado Refugee English as a Second Language** - Classes and tutoring for adult refugees in metropolitan Denver and Colorado Springs.

What programs currently exist?

CDE provides the following services through two other statewide efforts:

- **Colorado Literacy Action** provides training and technical assistance to volunteer programs based at library and community organizations. The program also supports tutoring and classroom instruction at homeless shelters.
- The Adult Education Office issues certificates and transcripts for the **GED Testing Program**. Coordination of GED testing is the only adult education program at CDE currently receiving state funds.

Governor's Job Training Office

The Governor's Job Training Office receives funds from the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) to provide training and job placement services to economically disadvantaged and unemployed individuals.

Applicants are tested to measure basic skills and general aptitude. A counselor works with the individual to prepare an employability development plan.

Persons whose tests indicate low literacy skills are encouraged to enroll in Adult Basic Education or GED- preparation programs. Educational services are tailored to the goals of the person's employment plan. Often, individuals start with remedial education and continue with vocational training.

The testing measures whether the applicant has at least a seventh grade reading level. GJTO compliance specialist Toni Alcott

estimates that at least half the persons served by JTPA programs in Colorado read below seventh grade level at the time they entered the program.

For the year ending April 1, 1990, JTPA financed Adult Basic Education and General Educational Development (GED) programs for 6,847 Colorado adults.

Community College System

The Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System (CCCOES) administers grants from the Job Training Partnership Act and The Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act.

In both cases, agencies receiving the grants provide a variety of services that can include basic skills instruction. Grants are given to community colleges, community based organizations and government agencies (such as the Department of Corrections), which provide job training, counseling and education services. For the first quarter of 1990, the JTPA funds coordinated by CCCOES provided literacy services to 806 individuals.

Department of Corrections

Persons convicted of a crime in Colorado may be sentenced to state prison, the county jail or to probation. The prison system is administered by the Department of Corrections, while jails are under the authority of county commissioners. Probation departments are administered by the Judicial Branch of state government. While persons sentenced to all three levels have literacy needs, only the Department of Corrections receives state funding for literacy.

Upon entering the state prison system, inmates complete diagnostic tests to determine their IQ and functioning level in reading, math, and language. Those results, together with their criminal history, psychological assessment, and risk of violent behavior, determine their placement in the correctional system.

"Earned time" may increase inmate waiting lists

Inmates can enroll in Adult Basic Education classes, English as a Second Language, GED preparation and Adult Performance Level classes. The APL classes cover such "survival skills" as consumer economics, health, government, law and using community resources.

Most money for inmate education comes from the state General Fund, although the Department receives some federal education and job training funds. A federal Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) grant was used to start a tutoring program in Buena Vista Correctional Facility. Approximately 1,600 inmates enrolled in education programs during the 1988-89 fiscal year. Most inmates who request education are enrolled, according to Jack Ludlow of the Department of Corrections, although there are waiting lists for some classes. Waiting lists could dramatically increase, however, since new legislation allows inmates to shorten their sentences through "earned time" for improving literacy skills.

County detention facilities generally house two types of prisoners: persons charged with a crime who are awaiting a court hearing and inmates who are serving short sentences, up to about 18 months. Many jails have few literacy services, since literacy training is not typically provided by the counties.

Some detention facilities have begun offering tutoring, either directly through federal ABE grants or through partnerships with local literacy providers. A few detention facilities are providing services through creative partnerships with several organizations.

The Arapahoe County Detention Facility, for example, offers Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language and GED-preparation through several inter-agency agreements. The Aurora Public Schools Continuing Education Department provides instructors, the Arapahoe Library District provides library services and T.H. Pickens Institute, the area vocational-technical school, provides vocational and job readiness training, job placement and follow-up. Funding is provided through the Colorado Department of Education (federal ABE funds), the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Department and Arapahoe County Employment and Training (JTPA funds).

Probation Services

Judges in Colorado have wide latitude to set conditions for probationers. For example, many judges require those on probation to attend drug or alcohol rehabilitation or counseling. Moffat county Judge Mary Lynne James orders people into GED programs and back to high school as an alternative to jail. "If more resources were available, I would do more," James testified at the northwest Colorado hearing. She suggested that a "literacy workup" be prepared on offenders facing jail time, so the issue could be dealt with at the time of sentencing.

The Twelfth Judicial District and Alamosa Public Schools have teamed up to provide a computer-based program for probationers who lack basic skills. The Probation Office obtained computers and software through a $30,000 grant from a Judicial Department fund that collects fees from probationers. The Alamosa Community Schools provides space for the computers, provides the teachers and monitors the students.

Judges have agreed to require probationers to attend a 20-week literacy class and they will present certificates of completion to the probationers. Since the computers are based at the school district's open high school, the software is also available to other adult literacy students in the community.

Institutions

Two state institutions provide adult literacy services: the **Colorado State Hospital** and **Fort Logan Mental Health Center**. Teachers provide individual and small group instruction, according to the needs of the individuals.

The State Hospital provides Adult Basic Education, GED preparation and "remedial education". The remedial help is for persons who graduated from high school, but who have lost skills because of their mental illness or medication. In 1989, the State Hospital education program served 250 adults.

Fort Logan offers ABE, GED, English as a Second Language and speech therapy services. The education program serves 50 to 60 adults per year. Both agencies receive state funding through the Department of Institutions. Ft. Logan receives some federal ABE funds as well.

Social Services

Federal welfare reform legislation created the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program, which provides federal, state and county funds to certain welfare applicants and recipients for basic skills instruction, child care and related expenses. Funds can also be used for vocational and on-the-job training and internships.

Participants are tested and meet with a counselor, who helps them develop a plan for education and employment. Priority is given to persons under age 24 who lack high school diplomas and GEDs and to long-term welfare recipients.

In Craig, welfare recipients attend the Adult Learning Assistance Program through Colorado Northwest Community College. The college provides weekly reports on the student's progress to the Department of Social Services, which reimburses CNCC for their expenses.

The program, while laudable, provides funding to reach only a small proportion of those who need assistance. For the first half of 1990, only $128,000 is available in Colorado for these programs. The federal requirement is to serve 7 percent of those eligible by October, 1991.

Local Providers

Literacy classes and tutoring are available from a variety of providers. This diversity offers Colorado adults a range of settings in which to learn, from school classrooms, community organizations, offices, churches and libraries to private homes.

Nonprofits raise local funds to operate programs.

Community-based organizations. Nonprofit organizations offer basic skills instruction as one of many services for their clients. For example, the Denver Indian Center in southwest Denver offers Adult Basic Education and GED preparation classes as well as preschool programs, employment and training services and a senior citizen program. Mini-workshops provide specialized assistance, such as preparing for the written test for a driver's license and nutrition and shopping on a fixed budget.

Nonprofits generally finance their programs through a combination of federal grants and funds raised through donations from local businesses, foundations and fund-raising events.

School District Literacy Programs. Some school districts operate adult education departments that offer basic skills instruc-

tion, such as ABE, GED-preparation and English as a Second Language. The district may also offer alternative high schools, programs for teen parents, and community schools that provide a range of instruction.

Schools can receive state reimbursement for high school students up to age 21, through the state-funded Second Chance program. Because many districts expect their adult education programs to be self-supporting, other classes charge tuition. The exceptions are those programs that offer ABE or ESL classes with funds from the federal Adult Education Act. Those programs must furnish books and classes free to students.

Workplace literacy.

Some school districts offer adult education services cooperatively through Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), which are regional agencies that provide services to member school districts. In Colorado, seven BOCES offer adult education programs.

Libraries. Colorado libraries offer tutoring programs through Colorado Literacy Action, a federally funded program that provides training and other assistance to local programs.

Libraries also support literacy efforts through "new reader collections" that provide books written at a basic level on topics of interest to adults. Thirty-three Colorado libraries have established such collections.

Community Colleges. Colorado's 16 community colleges operate developmental studies programs to assist students who are not ready for college level course work. The courses vary from campus to campus, but generally include reading, writing, math and study skills. Adults in the community can use the labs on a drop-in basis, while those who intend to take college courses register for a class for college credit.

The colleges charge tuition for remedial classes. Community colleges are the only higher education institutions in the state that receive state reimbursement for remedial classes. Colleges offer volunteer tutoring programs or contract with the Colorado Department of Education to provide Amnesty, ABE and GED-preparation classes.

Some community colleges also offer literacy programs at public schools for the parents of children enrolled in the elementary school. Another specialized service is to provide transitional classes for inmates recently released from the Department of Corrections.

Employers. Basic skills instruction is sometimes provided on-site by employers, either through the company's own staff or through contract with a literacy provider. For example, Red Rocks Community College in Jefferson County provides basic skills classes for employees at Coors, Martin Marietta and Cobe Laboratories.

The Broadmoor Hotel contracts with two teachers to provide English as a Second Language classes and pays the employees while they are in class. While the program costs the resort more than $10,000 per year, "it's a great benefit," said Sally Martin, Broadmoor

training director, because the staff, which speaks 14 languages, can serve as translators for guests.

Federal grants enable some adult education programs to work collaboratively with a number of employers to offer basic skills instruction at the workplace.

The Boulder Valley Schools adult education program, for example, is providing basic skills, English as a Second Language and civics instruction to Amnesty Education students at several hotels and nursing homes. At the Clarion Harvest House, students attend classes in a training room and can learn work-specific English words by visiting the kitchen and sleeping rooms during class.

The hands-on experience heightens productivity and job satisfaction, said Judy Malloy of the Clarion. "We've seen a decrease in turnover and increase in enjoyment. The staff communicates with each other more, which has benefitted employee relations." The Clarion pays employees for their time in class and will furnish baby sitters if needed. Family members are invited to participate. "The response has been overwhelming," Malloy said.

Teamwork stretches limited dollars

While some Colorado employers are pacesetters in this area, these examples are the exception to the norm. A 1989 Jobs for Colorado's Future study indicates that the lowest skilled workers are the *least likely* to receive training by their employers. The JCF Employer Survey found that semi-skilled employees are far less likely to receive formal training — despite the fact that employers reported that their semi-skilled workers demonstrate the greatest skill deficiencies.

Homeless Shelters. Fourteen shelters in cooperation with literacy providers, offer instruction in basic skills for homeless adults through the federal McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. A few other shelters operate similar programs with locally-raised funds.

Collaborative Efforts. Some Colorado organizations have found they can be more effective and make dollars go farther by working collaboratively on a single project. In Pueblo and Denver, the local community college and school district provide adult education services at local elementary schools. At Cheltenham Elementary in Denver, for example, the Community College of Denver provides literacy and English as a Second Language classes with the assistance of federal Amnesty dollars. The Denver Public Schools contributes the facilities and the administrator who coordinates evening activities.

At Bradford Elementary in Pueblo, parents and other community members receive basic skills instruction in reading, writing, math and GED preparation through Pueblo Community College and Head Start provides parenting classes. Babysitting is provided free to the adults through funds provided by the college and the Bradford Parent Teacher Organization (PTO).

In Fort Collins, a federal Even Start grant has made it possible for a number of community agencies to provide comprehensive

services to families. Adults and their preschool children attend one-hour weekly literacy activities at a neighborhood family learning center, followed by a weekly home visit from a family mentor. Project co-sponsors are the Poudre R-1 School District and the Colorado State University School of Occupational and Educational Studies.

Hotlines refer prospective students and tutors to programs.

Participants can take English as a Second Language and GED instruction through Front Range Community College, Lutheran Family Services and the Fort Collins Literacy Coalition. Ft. Collins Parks and Recreation and JTPA joined the prime sponsors on a summer school program serving toddlers through 17-year olds that included family field trips. The project budget is $200,000 per year, with a local match increasing 10 percent a year for four years.

Another form of collaboration is through coalitions.

Coalitions and Hotlines. Adults lacking basic skills do not know where to call and have difficulty using the normal research tools of the phone book and the library. They may not even realize help is available. Literacy programs have difficulty identifying prospective students and tutors, and often lack funds to provide tutor training.

One popular method for publicizing literacy services is through toll-free hotlines that provide a central location where prospective students and tutors can call for information.

The Colorado Literacy Assistance Center (COLAC) is a nonprofit organization that operates a statewide toll-free hotline. COLAC volunteers refer prospective tutors and students to programs that best fit their interests and needs. The service answers about 4,000 requests per year, about 60 percent of which are for the Denver metropolitan area. COLAC also sponsors conferences and serves as a clearinghouse on dates for workshops and other items of interest to literacy providers.

In several regions of the state, providers have banded together in coalitions to cooperatively publicize their efforts, provide local hotlines and meet shared needs. The six literacy coalitions are: Colorado Springs, Denver Metro PLUS, Pueblo, Ft. Collins, Mesa County (Grand Junction) and Logan County (Sterling). Each coalition sponsors some or all of the following:

- Awareness activities, such as events and public service announcements, to call attention to the literacy problem;
- Recruitment and referral of students and tutors, through publicity regarding a central local telephone number;
- Training for tutors or conferences; and
- Fund-raising to finance coalition activities.

The Ft. Collins Literacy Coalition, for example, sponsors an Adult Literacy Festival in Old Town during literacy week in September. The booths and activities are supplemented by publicity on milk cartons and shopping bags that carry the coalition's slogan and phone number. The Logan County Literacy Coalition has raised funds to provide tutor training and awareness activities.

Coalitions can provide useful support services to local programs. Broad-based coalitions are an effective way to bring together diverse interests, including providers, businesses, government and social service agencies, to focus on literacy.

Strength in Diversity

Colorado's diverse system of providing adult education and training opportunities is both a strength and a handicap. It is a strength because different individuals are comfortable and will gravitate to different settings. While some will be most comfortable in a public school building, others will prefer a library, community-based organization or a community college setting.

The CDE Adult Education Office gathers ABE enrollment statistics by age group, race, economic status and student functioning levels at program entry.

Graphs show that different groups will favor particular locations. Adults ages 25-44 gravitate to programs at school districts, while rural adults are more likely to attend classes at community colleges.

The differences are most striking when ethnic group preferences are examined.

(See Figure on Page 36.)

Why do we need all these programs?

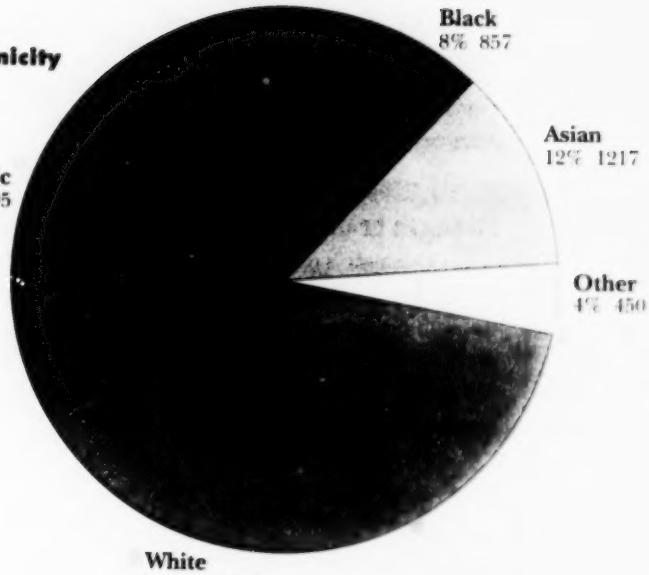
The Hidden Sector

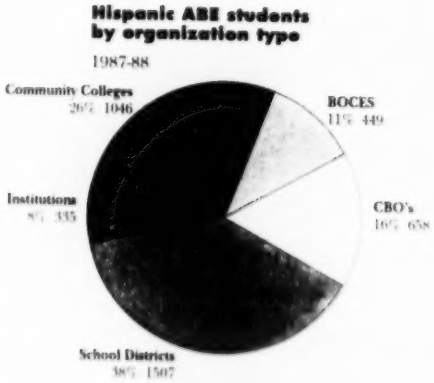
While diversity is a powerful advantage in meeting individual needs, it represents a funding handicap. Because programs are spread among a number of institutions, adult education is not as visible as the other major providers of education in the state: public schools and higher education. When policy and funding decisions are made, attention is focused on the larger, more integrated education systems of public schools, colleges and universities.

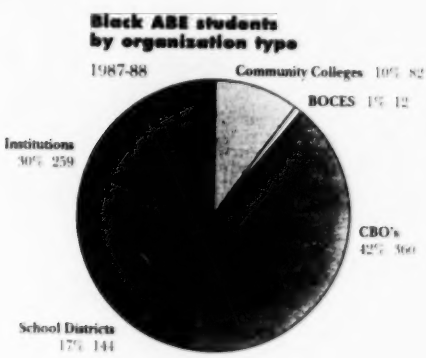
Less visible is the significant and growing portion of the population who, for whatever reason, did not complete high school or graduated with inadequate skills.

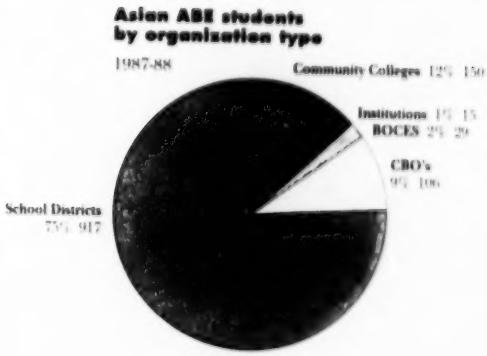
Adult education has historically been overlooked at the state level in Colorado, from the twin factors of "hidden students" and "hidden providers." Students are sometimes reluctant to come

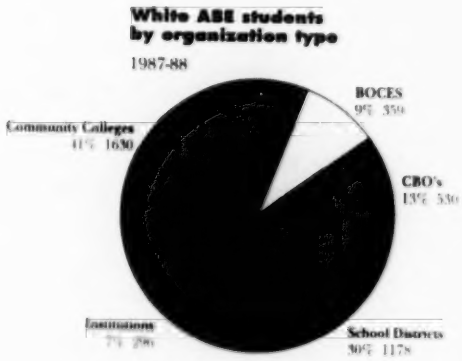
Ethnic Variations in ABE Programs











CBO = Community-based organization

Source: Colorado Department of Education

forward and admit they have need for literacy services because of the stigma attached to an inability to read and write.

The adult education "system" is hidden because it is dispersed among a variety of providers, many of whom are part of larger organizations — such as school districts and community colleges — whose primary mission is different from providing basic skills instruction to adults.

Short-Changing Colorado's Adults

In a study for the Western Governor's Association, Lew Perelman examined Colorado's investment in its "human capital" (children and adults) as it affects economic development. He found that:

- The "vast majority" of state spending is directed to the three traditional areas of state interest: K-12 education, higher education and community colleges and occupational education. The three programs combined account for 58% of the state general fund budget.
- All other education / training programs combined account for 1.6% of general appropriations.
- Local governments invest an amount comparable to the state's contribution, primarily for K-12 education.
- Federal funds for education / training in Colorado are less than 6% of the total spent by state and local governments, but often constitute the major or sole source of funds in specific target areas, such as job training for the unemployed and disadvantaged.

Why aren't literacy programs better known?

While Perelman was not able to study Colorado's private sector contributions, national data suggest that education and training investments by private employers, including the military, are probably 30 to 40% of the amount spent by state and local governments.

"While at least as many adults are in need of basic education (up to high school graduation or equivalent) as children in the state," Perelman wrote, "over 99.9 percent of government expenditures for basic education are targeted on children (ages 5 to 18).

"If other, private funding sources were meeting the need for adult basic education, the current distribution of state spending between children and adults might appear reasonable," he added.

Instead, the limited information available suggests "there is a significant, general shortfall of investment in the learning needs of the adult work force, especially for those needing basic education," Perelman concluded.

Raising Productivity

What would be the return on investment if Colorado increased its commitment to adults who lack basic skills? One measure

is to examine the accomplishments of persons who have participated in existing literacy programs available in Colorado.

A survey of Adult Basic Education Program participants in 1987-88 found that:

- 83% met their personal educational goals;
- 59% passed the General Educational Development (GED) Test;
- 45% prepared for further education or vocational training;
- 11% of immigrant participants became U.S. citizens.

Participants in Adult Basic Education programs achieved measurable economic successes:

- $ 56% of those unemployed obtained jobs;
- $ 30% of those "under-employed" earned promotions, raises or better jobs; and
- $ 7% of those on public assistance became financially independent.

What is the track record for basic skills instruction?

Education and Earning Potential

Persons who obtain a GED certificate can expect to earn significantly higher salaries that those who lack a high school diploma or certificate. In 1985, the U.S. Census Bureau calculated the following projected wages for various levels of schooling:

Less than 8 Years	$13,749
4 Years of High School	$19,543
4 Years of College	$30,391

The vast majority of Coloradans want to be self-sufficient. Illiterate adults carry a handicap they hide from employers, neighbors, even loved ones. Many more could be served if funding were available within a comprehensive system that provided more thorough education and outreach as well as assistance with the major obstacles of transportation and child care.

Dollars invested in the state's citizens will be repaid many times over through money saved in social programs and dollars received from sales and income taxes contributed by these self-sufficient individuals.

V.

STATE LITERACY ACTIVITIES

The literacy issue is simmering on the "front burner" in many states. An Adult Literacy Commission survey in Fall, 1989 found 12 states that had developed state literacy plans and recommendations and 11 states that had adopted legislation in recent years. Another four states had pending legislation.

One observer of state level literacy activity sees an evolution in the way states are approaching the issue. "Three years ago, states were appointing task forces and issuing proclamations," said Jean Hammink, executive director of Literacy Network, an organization supporting collaborative efforts in literacy.

Now, states are taking a more substantive approach, with officials ranging from the governor's office to the private sector, legislators and state administrators, examining literacy services.

Issues

One key issue is *building the capacity* of literacy providers to respond to changing needs. Many programs rely largely on volunteers to deliver services and can offer instruction to individuals for only four hours per week.

Welfare reform legislation designed to help persons become self-sufficient requires programs to work with an individual four hours a day instead of four hours a week, Hammink explained.

The *goals of instruction* must meet the needs identified by the learner and employers, she added. Instead of building an ability to recognize the sounds of letters, if the goal is self-sufficiency, the program needs to help the adult apply basic literacy skills to fill out an application form, find a job and keep it.

In addition to focusing on *outcomes*, a priority is placed on accountability. Policy-makers want evidence the funds are being spent most effectively.

How are other states addressing the problem?

More and more states are looking at *family literacy* as the most effective way to attack illiteracy, by sharing resources across systems. Such efforts involve Head Start, a new federal program called Even Start that works with parents and children together, Adult Basic Education and Early Childhood and Family Education programs.

Workplace literacy efforts are focusing on raising awareness and providing training to both employers and literacy programs, Hammink continued. Employers are given an overview of literacy so they can determine how the jobs of their employees are going to change and whether their employees have the necessary skills to adapt. The second stage is to work with employers on assessing their employees and to develop curriculum for those needing help.

Literacy providers are shown how to tailor worksite programs to meet the particular needs of the employer and employees. It is not enough to simply transfer the same classes taught in the community to the workplace, Hammink noted.

States are also working on improving *coordination* at the state and local level. This happens most commonly through state

interagency groups of administrators and coalitions of providers at the local and regional level.

Funding

Colorado is part of a relatively small minority of states that provide no funding for literacy services for the general population. A 1987 survey by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) found that three-fourths of the states either match or add to federal Adult Basic Education Act funds.

The average amount of state funds allocated was $4 million, although the range was great. In 1987-88, Michigan was highest with an allocation of $36 million, while West Virginia represented the low end with $70,000.

The ECS survey looked at expenditures per pupil over three years and found "a remarkable consistency across years and states" of $100 to $200 per adult, said Barbara Holmes, ECS project director. As with total allocations, the per student costs varied across a large range, from less than $100 per pupil to more than $3,000.

A Colorado appropriation of $200 per pupil would double what programs are currently receiving in governmental assistance, since federal Adult Basic Education Act funds are allocated in Colorado at the rate of $60 to $200 per pupil.

The right to a free high school diploma, no matter what age.

State Commitment to Literacy

The Adult Literacy Commission survey found that large allocations for literacy were often tied to a philosophy that adults as well as children are entitled to a free, basic education.

In Michigan, for example, the courts have ruled that the State Constitution grants all persons the right to a free education as long as they are working towards a high school diploma, said Mae Mittag of the Michigan Department of Education.

Since that decision, adults enrolled in basic education or working toward a high school diploma have been counted as full time equivalent students for purposes of state aid. For 1988-89, state aid for adults is $3,400 per student for 480 hours of instruction.

In Utah, elementary education is free to all adult students. Adult secondary education is free to the adult student who does not have a diploma "to the extent adult education funds are available."

Target Populations

Some states have established priorities on who should receive adult education services. Pennsylvania's Adult Literacy Act of 1986 established a grant program. In evaluating grants, the Secretary of Education considers the number of potential students who are receiving state or public assistance, are unemployed, who are members of minority groups or who have less than a fifth grade reading level.

The Minnesota Adult Literacy Policy Group set similar priorities, urging policy-makers to concentrate state resources on those "with greatest need and the least chance of success without substantial support." The top priority group included those with less than an eighth grade education or who are non-English speaking.

It is clear that a majority of states have assumed responsibility for the education of adults who lack basic skills. The right to a free public education in many of those states does not in fact end at age 18 or 21, but is available, at least with partial state support, throughout a resident's lifetime.

APPENDIX A

The following ideas were suggested by individuals testifying at the regional literacy hearings.

For the Legislature

1. Mandate GED for early prison release.

For the Adult Literacy Commission:

1. Develop a public information campaign that carries three messages: a problem exists, help is available and there is no stigma unless the person who needs help makes no effort.
2. Develop a plan that will work as well in rural as urban Colorado.
3. Conduct a public relations campaign to encourage more acceptance of cultural diversity, which can remove stigma and barriers to accents in the workplace.

For Business:

1. Give release time for employees to attend training on-site or in a local program.
2. Make use of existing resources to avoid duplication, such as contracting with a literacy provider to assess needs, provide instruction, analyze materials for readability.
3. Allow staff time off to tutor.
4. Sponsor mini-camps to help workers with basic skills and pay them while they learn.

For Literacy Providers:

1. Use homebound service to increase the number of people who could be helped.
2. Use more senior citizens as volunteers.
3. Develop mentor programs to encourage adults to enroll in class.
4. Involve parents in a "cooperative school". They would attend class three-fourths of the time and spend one-fourth caring for children. This offers a low-cost solution to the child care dilemma.
5. Increase English as a Second Language classes with follow-up basic skills education.
6. Publicize services as a priority activity.
7. Establish a fund to help individuals pay for the GED exam.

General Recommendations:

1. Government, business, and society must develop a positive atmosphere that will encourage persons who lack basic literacy skills to seek help without embarrassment.

APPENDIX B

Regional Literacy Hearings

The Adult Literacy Commission extends its sincere appreciation to the Steering Committees who planned and conducted the hearings and the Panelists who heard the testimony. The information and recommendations gathered have been very helpful in the Commission's work.

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